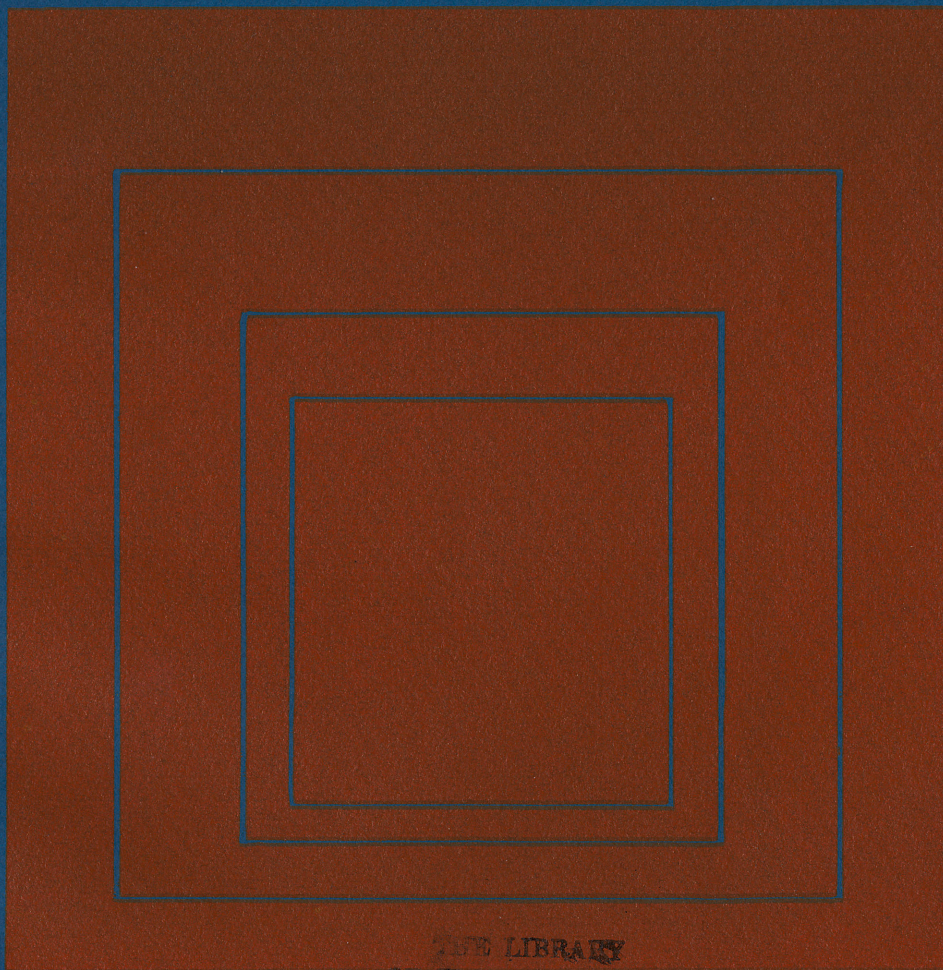



Cleveland Museum of Art - Collections

ART OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

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The twentieth century has seen fast, continual and astonishing changes. At the beginning of the century, a few men saw the first airplane fly. Little more than six decades later, millions of people around the world watched American astronauts walk on the surface of the moon. Art of this century reflects the changing world through a multiplicity of styles, presenting the viewer with countless intellectual and visual challenges. This brief survey is a general and, we hope, helpful guide to the Contemporary Collection of The Cleveland Museum of Art. Most of the artists mentioned are represented by works in the galleries.

Twentieth century artists have turned to the inner world of man, to the world of the mind and the emotions, rather than to the external natural world. They have increasingly relied on the formal elements in a work of art—color, line, shape, space—to carry the force of the work. Even before the century began, painters like Cézanne, Gauguin and Van Gogh used highly individual and subjective forms and colors to give us a new view of nature. Generations of artists followed their lead, exploring the idea that reality and what the eye sees are not identical. The spirit of the artist of the twentieth century was perhaps best expressed by the painter Paul Klee: “Art does not reproduce what can be seen; it makes things visible.”

Early in the century, Henri Matisse led a group of French painters who were dubbed the “Fauves”—the wild beasts—for their use of glaring colors and distorted forms. Their startling canvases, so different from the traditional paintings of the nineteenth century, angered critics and public alike. Similar revolutionary groups of artists appeared throughout Europe, like the Blue Rider, centered in Munich (Marc, Kandinsky, Klee) and the German Expressionists (Kirchner, Schmidt-Rottluff).

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Self Portrait with Hat

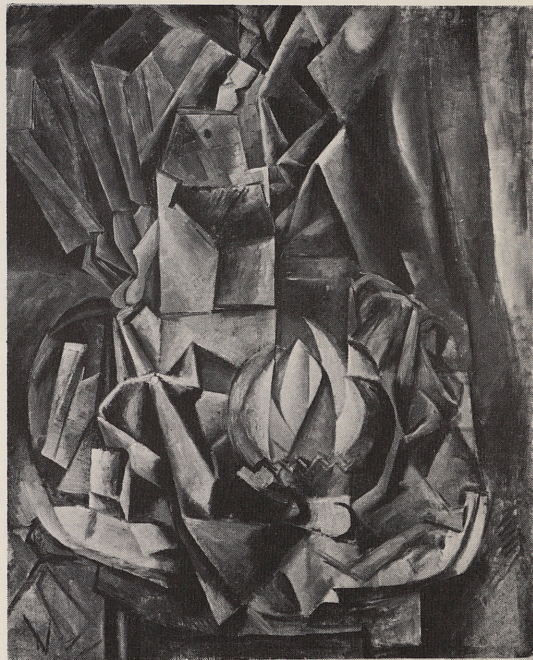
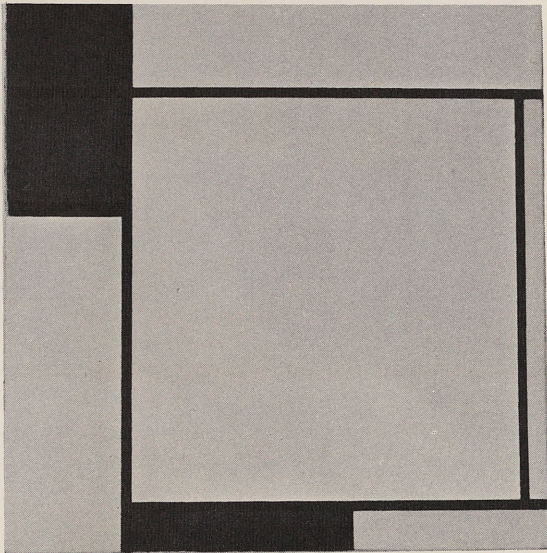
Oil on canvas, 1919, 28 7/8 x 25 5/8 inches.

Karl Schmidt-Rottluff, German, b. 1884.

Bequest of Dr. William R. Valentiner. 65.440

Another group of French artists, the Cubists (Picasso, Braque), took what has been called a more intellectual approach. Their primary concern was the structure of the painting; color was secondary. Their method was a painter's kind of scientific analysis; they rejected the single viewpoint of objects in space, instead treating their subject as simultaneously viewed from above, below, and diverse vantage points, with the shifting spaces those many views provided. The Cubists began applying actual material, such as paper, wood and string, a collage technique which influenced many later artists. The Italian painter Severini, living in Paris, was a link between the Cubists and the Italian Futurists (Boccioni, Balla) who used broken and fragmented forms to capture the sense of movement in space and time.

Out of Cubism, Expressionism, and a score of other investigations of form, space, time and color relationships, came a new attitude toward reality. Each style was explored and its discoveries added to the growing language of abstract forms that artists used and extended.



Eventail, Boîte à Sel, Melon
(*Fan, Salt Box, Melon*)

Oil on canvas, 1909, 32 x 25 1/4 inches.
Pablo Picasso, Spanish (French School), b. 1881.
Leonard C. Hanna Jr. Bequest. 69.22

Composition with Red, Yellow and Blue
Oil on canvas, 20 1/8 x 20 1/8 inches.
Piet Mondrian, Dutch, 1872 - 1944.
Contemporary Collection of
The Cleveland Museum of Art. 67.215

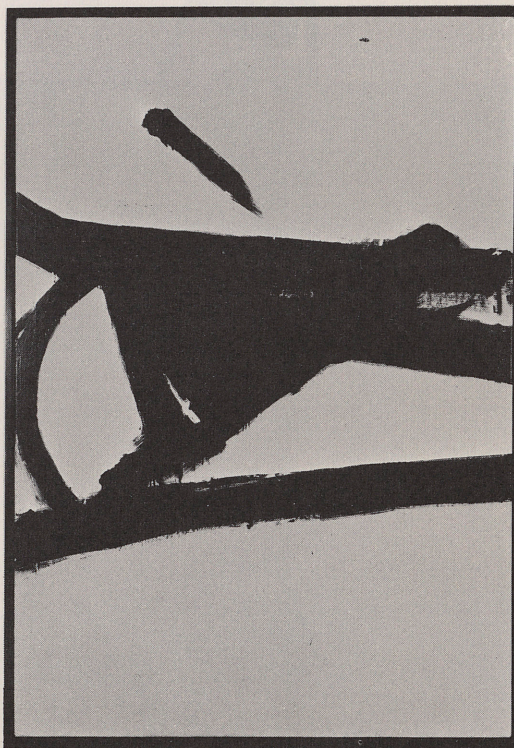
Some artists' works became completely non-representational (Kandinsky, Mondrian, Kupka). Piet Mondrian explained that he was searching for the "great hidden laws of nature [that] are more or less hidden behind the superficial aspect of nature." His search led him eventually to reduce his paintings to straight lines, the three primary colors, and black and white. He tried to arrive at perfect balance by constructing asymmetrical arrangements of lines and shapes.

The search for harmony and order was challenged by the senselessness and chaos of World War I. Dadaism, the cult of absurdity, was a reaction against all established traditions of logic and art; it is only partially represented in this collection by works of Schwitters and Grosz. Following quickly was a related literary and philosophical movement, Surrealism, whose exponents in the visual arts included Miró, Ernst and Dali. Surrealism was a way of living and thinking about life: a man could be a Surrealist and make poetry, paintings, or pastry. Artists—poets and writers as well as painters—set out to explore the subconscious mind, that tangled world of fantasy and dreams which Freud had opened and which they found a rich and intriguing source of imagery. In surrealist paintings, fantasies are made visible; objects can float through the air, human bodies may look like machines, mysterious events are painted with precision and clarity.

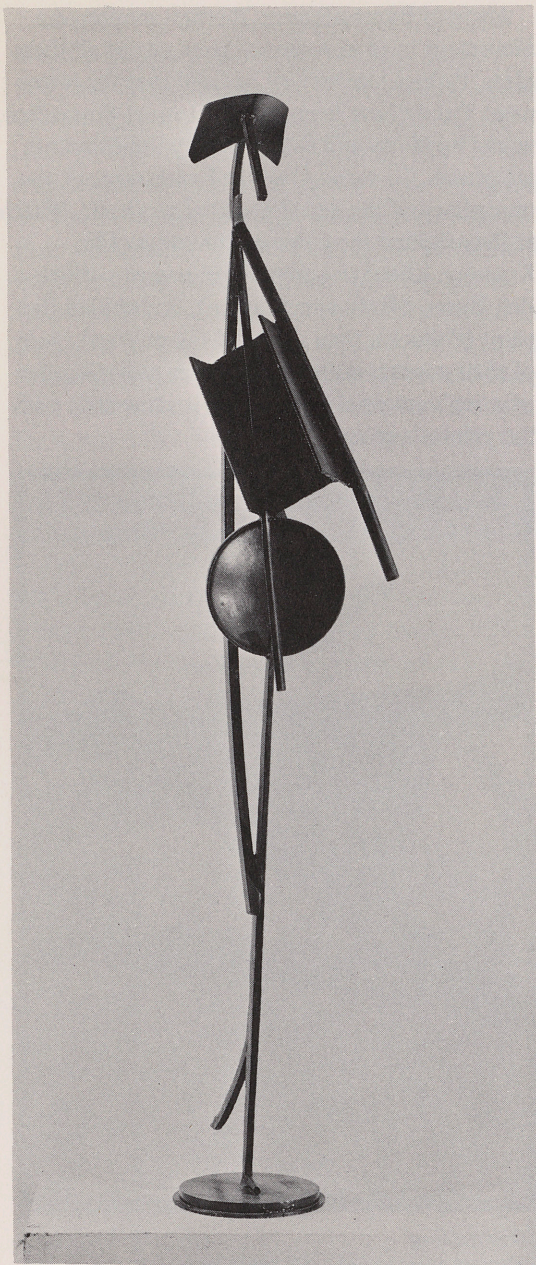
Distinctly different from Surrealism in its attitudes and interests was the Bauhaus school, which flourished in Germany between the two World Wars (Feininger). The Bauhaus's governing idea was that architecture was the supreme art and that all other arts were subsidiary and contributory to it. A school of design for craftsmen as well as artists, the Bauhaus emphasized the rigorously logical expression in form of the structure, purpose and material of whatever was produced, which ranged from buildings to tools and textiles.

All of these European movements took root in the United States during the 1930's, when European artists fled from the threat of war to the safety of America. Designers trained in the Bauhaus influenced American architecture and drastically altered the look of modern American cities. Many American painters were inspired by the abstract, or nonrepresentational, images created by European painters and by the Surrealists' "automatism," a self-revealing approach to the bare canvas.

Abstract Expressionism, the first modern art movement born in America, grew out of all these ideas. Robert Motherwell has said that the movement should have been called Abstract Surrealism; works by Matta and Gorky clearly indicate both influences. To some Abstract Expressionists, the immediacy of the act of painting was basic. Whether they slashed the color on the canvas (de Kooning, Kline) or applied it in impasto—thick rich layers—(Hofmann, Guston), or dribbled the paint (Pollock), they regarded the physical vigor of their contact with the canvas as providing the painting's essential meaning, as it came alive with the painter's spirit.



Accent Grave
Oil on canvas, 75 1/4 x 51 3/4 inches.
Franz Kline, American, 1910 - 1962.
Anonymous Gift. 67.3



Pilgrim
Steel, 1957, 81 1/2 inches high.
David Smith, American, 1906 - 1965.
Contemporary Collection of
The Cleveland Museum of Art. 66.385

For other Abstract Expressionists, it was the abstract or symbolic image, carefully composed and painted, that was the significant content of the painting (Motherwell, Rothko). Still other artists retained the clearly recognizable human figure (Lindner, Gallo, Porter, Diebenkorn), in new and sometimes startling or amusing forms.

Junk as material for art found great favor with many Abstract Expressionists (Bontecou, Hunt, Müller, Rauschenberg). When Kurt Schwitters, the Dadaist, used trash for his small collages, it had seemed a revolutionary idea. Now David Smith, the most important among the new sculptors fascinated by scrap metal, could remark that "if Michelangelo were alive and working here today, he would have used junk rather than marble."

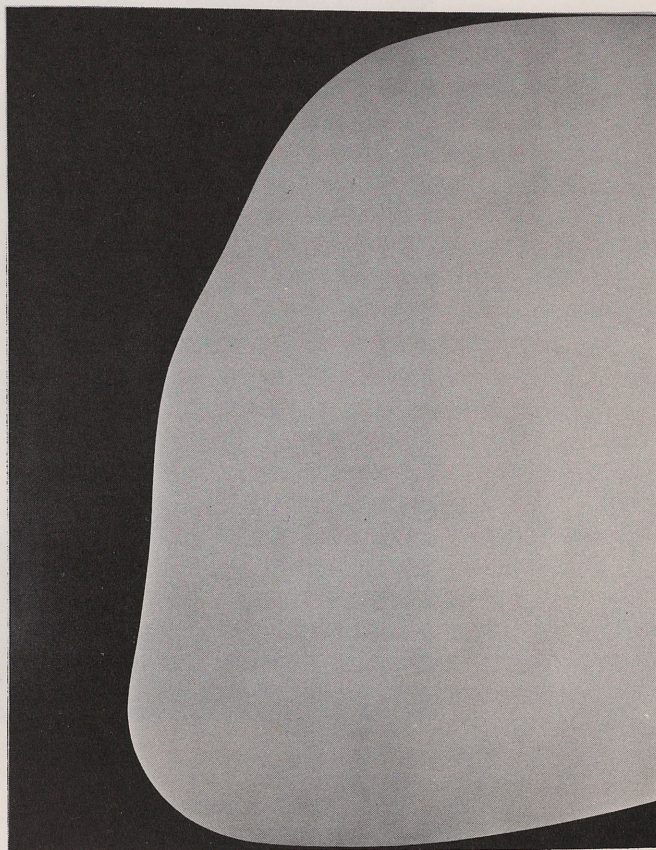
Artists living in the mid-twentieth century are, like the rest of us, forever faced by the banal and garish sights of the modern city landscape. Huge billboards, flashing traffic and advertising signs, drive-in restaurants and sprawling automobile lots—all stir a welter of mixed feelings. Some artists abstract such scenes, creating paintings of lively pattern and design (Davis). The "Pop" artists lift everyday items out of their usual surroundings and force us to look at them with fresh, if sometimes skeptical, eyes. Numbers, letters of the alphabet (Johns), the soup can (Warhol), comic strips (Lichtenstein) and other items from popular culture have become the subject matter of art. Though the Pop artists are primarily concerned with the formal problems of art, their works can be considered a kind of social comment.

Optical painting—sometimes called Retinal, more commonly "Op"—is a different matter altogether. Artists use totally non-representational images, usually geometric shapes, to produce color and line compositions that deceive the eye (Albers, Stanczak, Vasarely). Josef Albers says he works toward discovering the surprising "discrepancies between physical fact and psychic effect."

Many Minimalist painters, like the Optical painters who preceded them, admire a matte uniform surface (Kelly), deliberately stripping the canvas bare of all the painterly, emotion-filled, personal elements that the Abstract Expressionists relished. The Minimalists, frequently using plastic paint, create with one or two lines and shapes and large expanses of color stark spare images that provide little information to the viewer. The inevitable tensions set up by these images provoke the viewer to dig around in his own responses, to shift emotional as well as visual gears.

More painterly and more appealing to the sense of touch are the works of the Color-Field painters (Bannard, Poons), whose high-key colors and intricate relationships develop out of the earlier works of Frankenthaler and Louis.

A recent development in the artists' efforts to explore sensation is the constructed environment, works of art people can walk into. The customary gap, or distance, between the viewer and the object is severely reduced. The viewer is forced to recognize new and unfamiliar relationships between himself and "art".

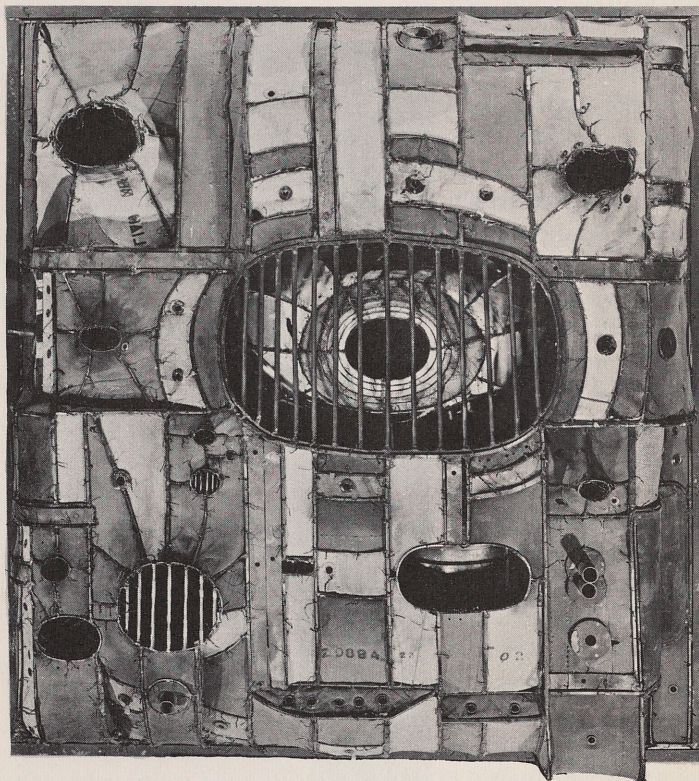


Red Blue

Oil on canvas, 1962, 90 x 69 1/2 inches.
Ellsworth Kelly, American, b. 1923.
Contemporary Collection of
The Cleveland Museum of Art. 64.142

Contemporary painting and sculpture mirror the shifting relationships in modern life we share with artists, but which we do not always see with their sharp vision. They walk the same streets, observe the same events, see the same images, just as they share our inner experiences, our private frustrations and satisfactions. At its best, contemporary art "speaks" a visual language that reveals our own world to us, even those views we do not, or do not care to, recognize. Lee Bontecou has said that in working she hopes to "glimpse some of the fear, hope, ugliness, beauty and mystery that exists in us all . . . the (observer) is welcome to see and feel in them what he wishes in terms of himself."

Art of the most recent past is not yet art history. It is still precisely what all art sets out to be, individual objects created by serious artists to compel the eye. Some of these paintings, sculptures and constructions are refreshing, others startling; not all are likable; some are immediately appealing. They share, in the Museum's opinion, qualities of conception and craft that compare favorably with the art of the past out of which they come. Some will be judged significant, others trivial, by future observers as our years become history. While there are still no final conclusions, the works are free to address themselves, vividly and directly, to the visitor with bold and sympathetic eyes.



Untitled

Construction of canvas, metal and wire, 1961, 52 x 47 7/8 inches.

Lee Bontecou, American, b. 1931.

Contemporary Collection of The Cleveland Museum of Art. 67.77

From the Cleveland Collection:

Artists and their work relating to the text
in the order they appear.

Cézanne, Paul	<i>The Brook</i>	Oil on Canvas
Gauguin, Paul	<i>L'Appel</i>	Oil on Canvas
Van Gogh, Vincent	<i>Poplars on a Hill</i>	Oil on Canvas
Klee, Paul	<i>Karneval im Schnee</i>	Water Color on Paper
Matisse, Henri	<i>Interior with Etruscan Vase</i>	Oil on Canvas
Kirchner, Ernst L.	<i>Wrestlers in a Circus</i>	Oil on Canvas
Schmidt-Rottluff, Karl	<i>Self Portrait with Hat</i>	Oil on Canvas
Picasso, Pablo	<i>Fan, Salt Box, Melon</i>	Oil on Canvas
Braque, Georges	<i>Le Violoncelle</i>	Collage on Chip Board
Mondrian, Piet	<i>Composition with Red, Yellow, and Blue</i>	Oil on Canvas
Kupka, Frank (Frantisek)	<i>Amorpha, Fugue à Deux Couleurs</i>	Oil on Canvas
Schwitters, Kurt	<i>Kleiner Tanz</i>	Collage
Grosz, George	<i>Student</i>	Water Color on Paper
Miró, Joan	<i>Constellation . . .</i>	Gouache and Oil on Paper
Feininger, Lyonel	<i>Markwippach</i>	Oil on Canvas
Echaurren, Roberto Matta	<i>La Rosa</i>	Oil on Canvas
Gorky, Arshile	<i>Landscape</i>	Oil and Pencil on Canvas
de Kooning, Willem	<i>Figure</i>	Oil on Cardboard
Kline, Franz	<i>Accent Grave</i>	Oil on Canvas
Hofmann, Hans	<i>Smaragd Red and Germinating Yellow</i>	Oil on Canvas
Guston, Philip	<i>Sleeper I</i>	Oil on Canvas
Motherwell, Robert	<i>Elegy to the Spanish Republic LV</i>	Oil on Canvas
Rothko, Mark	<i>Red Maroons, No. 2</i>	Oil on Canvas
Lindner, Richard	<i>Louis II</i>	Oil on Canvas
Gallo, Frank	<i>Male Image</i>	Epoxy Resin
Porter, Fairfield	<i>Nyack</i>	Oil on Canvas
Diebenkorn, Richard	<i>Woman Wearing Flower</i>	Oil on Canvas
Bontecou, Lee	<i>Untitled</i>	Construction of Canvas and Metal
Hunt, Richard	<i>Fragmented Figure</i>	Welded Steel
Müller, Robert	<i>L'Avaleur</i>	Welded Iron
Rauschenberg, Robert	<i>Gloria</i>	Oil and Paper Collage on Canvas
Smith, David	<i>Pilgrim</i>	Steel
Davis, Stuart	<i>Composition Concrete</i>	Oil on Canvas
Johns, Jasper	<i>Gray Alphabets</i>	Lithograph
Albers, Josef	<i>Homage to the Square: Star Blue</i>	Oil on Board
Stanczak, Julian	<i>Filtered Yellow</i>	Acrylic on Canvas
Vasarely, Victor	<i>Lom-Lan</i>	Oil on Canvas
Kelly, Ellsworth	<i>Red Blue</i>	Oil on Canvas
Bannard, Darby	<i>The Till No. 4</i>	Alkyd Resin on Canvas
Poons, Larry	<i>Untitled</i>	Oil on Canvas
Frankenthaler, Helen	<i>April IV</i>	Oil on Paper
Louis, Morris	<i>Number 99</i>	Acrylic on Canvas

Suggested Reading:

All books listed are available for reference in the Museum library.
Some may be purchased at the Museum's sales desk.

- H. H. Arnason, *History of Modern Art*, New York, 1968
Dore Ashton, *The Unknown Shore*, New York, 1962
Alfred H. Barr, Jr., *Masters of Modern Art*, New York, 1954
John Canaday, *Mainstreams of Modern Art*, New York, 1959
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Edward B. Henning, *Fifty Years of Modern Art, 1916 - 1966*, Cleveland, 1966
Sam Hunter, *Modern American Painting and Sculpture*, New York, 1959
Sam Hunter, *Modern French Painting*, New York, 1956
Allan Kaprow, *Assemblage, Environments and Happenings*, New York, 1966
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Katharine Kuh, *The Artist's Voice*, New York, 1962
Carlton Lake and Robert Maillard, *Dictionary of Modern Painting*, New York, 1956
Robert Maillard, *Dictionary of Modern Sculpture*, New York, 1960
Herbert Read, *A Concise History of Modern Sculpture*, London, 1964
Harold Rosenberg, *The Tradition of the New*, New York, 1961
Robert Rosenblum, *Cubism and Twentieth Century Art*, New York, 1961
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John Rublowsky, *Pop Art*, New York, 1965
William C. Seitz, *The Responsive Eye*, New York, 1965
Michael Seuphor, *Dictionary of Abstract Painting*, New York, 1957

CMA Audio-Visual Slide-Tape: *Words of Twentieth Century Artists*

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